DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 402 CS 217 448

AUTHOR Smith, Carl B.
TITLE Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3-7.
INSTITUTION Family Learning Association, Bloomington, IN.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
ISBN ISBN-1-883790-72-7
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 50p.; For related books in the series, see CS 217 447-450.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0028
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Indiana University, 2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 140, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698; Web site: http://eric.indiana.edu/.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- ERIC Publications (071) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Literature; Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; *Family Literacy; Parent Child Relationship; *Reading Aloud to Others; Reading Interests; *Reading Material Selection; *Reading Materials
IDENTIFIERS Reading Behavior

ABSTRACT

This book is part of a series that helps parents choose books for their children and talk with them about books in ways that actively engage children with the meaning on the printed page. The Introduction discusses children's natural development and how it affects their reading interests and behaviors. The first chapter, "Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 3 to 5," discusses read-aloud strategies and conversation starters. The next chapter, "Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 5," suggests and describes 18 books that match the developmental characteristics of beginning readers. It organizes them according to a sense of time, the child's main interest, everyday experiences, a world of make-believe, and taking the initiative. The following chapter, "Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 6 and 7," discusses read-aloud strategies, conversation starters, and creating empathy. It is followed by "Choosing Books for Children, Ages 6 and 7," which suggests and describes 32 books that meet children's developmental needs and that might fit their new, broadening interests. The next chapter describes 19 books on sensitive issues. A Conclusion reviews the most important points. (SR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 450 402

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 – 7

from **The Family Learning Association**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS 217 448

ERIC

Clearinghouse on English, Reading, and Communication

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7

Carl B. Smith

from

The Family Learning Association

ERIC
Clearinghouse on English, Reading, and Communication

FAMILY LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Published by
ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
Indiana University, 2805 East 10th Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2698
Carl B. Smith, Director
and
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101
Bloomington, IN 47401

Copyright ©2001 by The Family Learning Association

Cover Design & Production Editor: Lanny Thomas

ERIC (an acronym for **E**ducational **R**esources **I**nformation **C**enter) is a national network of 16 clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for building the ERIC database by identifying and abstracting various educational resources, including research reports, curriculum guides, conference papers, journal articles, and government reports. The Clearinghouse on **R**eading, **E**nglish, and **C**ommunication (ERIC/REC) collects educational information specifically related to reading, English, journalism, speech, and theater at all levels. ERIC/REC also covers interdisciplinary areas such as media studies, reading and writing technology, mass communication, language arts, critical thinking, literature, and many aspects of literacy.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0028. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

ERIC/REC Advisory Board

Douglas Barnard
Associate Superintendent
of Instruction
Mesa Public Schools
549 North Stapley Street
Mesa, AZ 85203

Joan Irwin
Director of Publications,
International
Reading Association
PO Box 8193
Newark, DE 19711

Jack Humphrey
Director
University of Evansville
Middle Grades Reading Network
1800 Lincoln Ave.
Evansville, IN 47722

Robert Pavlik
Professor of English Education
Cardinal Stritch University
6801 North Yates Road
Milwaukee, WI 53217

James Gaudino
Executive Director, National
Communication Association
5105 Backlick Road, Building E
Annandale, VA 22003

Lenore Sandel
Editor, ASCD Whole
Language Newsletter
33 Sherman Avenue
Rockville Center, NY 11570

Earlene Holland
Associate Director, Office of
Program Development
251 East Ohio Street,
Room 229,
State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Faith Schullstrom
Executive Director, National
Council of Teachers of English
1111 W. Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

Josefina Tinajero
Director, Mother and
Daughter Program
University of Texas
500 West University Avenue
El Paso, TX 79968

CONTENTS

Introduction 7

Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 3 to 5 11

- Read-Aloud Strategies 11
- Conversation Starters 12

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 5 15

- A Sense of Time 15
- Your Child's Main Interest 16
- Everyday Experiences 17
- A World of Make-Believe 18
- Taking the Initiative 19

Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 6 and 7 21

- Read-Aloud Strategies 22
- Conversation Starters 23
- Creating Empathy 25

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 6 and 7 27

- Books that Suit Your Child's Attention Span 27
- Familiar Stories 30
- A Sense of Independence 31
- The Power of Imagination 32
- Understanding Other People 33
- Telling Right from Wrong 34
- The Big Question 35
- A Sense of Humor 36

Conclusion 37

Books on Sensitive Issues 43

Introduction

When you think about beginning to read and talk about books with your child, a good thing to keep in mind is just where this particular child is in the development journey. A typical three- to five-year-old will accept what she finds in books and on TV as real, but by the age of six or seven, she's starting to sort out fantasy from reality. This means that the younger child enjoys magic and fantasy characters and loves using language as word play.

As she reaches the age of six or seven, she becomes more interested in stories about people or situations she can relate to—things she might do, that might happen in her life. The younger child "reads pictures" to help tell stories and easily memorizes simple rhymes and memorable phrases. But in a couple of years, the same child can start figuring out the "code" so that printed words carry meaning—she recognizes patterns and can draw on past experience with books.

Being aware of this natural development means that you can experience the excitement of watching and guiding—you'll know what to watch for, how to help pick books to read, and what to expect as you read and talk about those books with your child.

Where Do We Start?

If your child is 3, 4, or 5 years old, lots of things are going on in his life that make particular kinds of stories especially stimulating. Not all children have the same experiences, but it's still a good idea to look at the developmental profiles of older and younger readers to see if there's a match to your child's unique development. As a general guideline, though, you might expect a child of this age to gain language skill very quickly while showing a short attention span. He'll like books that can be read in one sitting, and will love being read to several times a day. He'll chant predictable phrases from his books and retell the stories and repeat the rhymes.

As with children of any age, interest is the most important factor in selecting books. You can help your child select books that are likely to have an immediate appeal for her by becoming more aware of the kinds of interests and preoccupations kids typically have. The following descriptions and book lists will give you a good idea of how children's reading tastes develop as they grow older. Please remember, these age indexes are only guidelines.

Children Ages 3 to 5

Developmental Characteristics	Reading Interests	Books
Rapid development of language: active, short attention span; understanding of time limited to "now" and "not yet."	Enjoys chanting predictable phrases, retelling stories, and repeating rhymes; likes books that can be read in one sitting; enjoys being read to several times a day.	Goodnight Moon Peter Spier's Rain The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Curious about own world; learns through imaginative play; make-believe and magic seem very real.	Enjoys stories about everyday experiences; likes stories that provide comfort and reassurance; enjoys stories that involve imaginative play.	A Baby Sister for Frances Nice Little Girls William's Doll Harry the Dirty Dog How I Was Born What's Under My Bed? When the New Baby Comes, I'm Moving Out Corduroy Where's Spot Brave Irene The House on East 88th Street
Takes pride in own accomplishments; draws definite judgments about "good" and "bad."	Enjoys stories with "small" characters who show initiative and bravery; likes happy endings; expects characters who behave badly to be punished.	Katy and the Big Snow The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit Madeline The Little Engine That Could

Children of this age are active and have limited attention spans; thus they prefer books that can be read in a single sitting. Books listed here for three- to five-year-olds are intended for adults to read aloud with children. By reading to and with your child, you can actually advance his reading readiness. Research shows that children who have pleasurable reading-aloud experiences with their parents are generally more interested in learning to read. These children also tend to master reading skills more readily than do those kids who have not been read to on a regular basis.

TIP

Choose books that can be read
at one sitting.

Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 3 to 5

Three- to five-year-olds usually realize that the story is revealed through the pictures on the book's pages. Because most three- to five-year-olds have not yet solved the print code, it's important to use picture books to start book conversations with these young readers.

Read-Aloud Strategies

Children of this age delight in being read to, but they also enjoy actively participating in reading and appreciate being able to tell a story in their own way. You can invite your child to take an active part in your reading time together by—

Creating opportunities for your kid to correct an obvious mistake you have deliberately made. Your child can take great pride and pleasure in correcting you when you make a "mistake" about a familiar character's name, or when you playfully change the story line of one of her favorite books.

Asking your child to retell a favorite and often-read story.

Inviting your child to use information in the pictures to extend or make up parts of the story—to tell or read the story from looking at the pictures. It's not important whether her retelling or extension of the story is "correct." Just listen; express joy; ask questions for clarification.

Conversation Starters

Conversations with children of this age will probably be fairly short, so be prepared to ask lots of questions she will enjoy answering. At this age, when children are still surprised and charmed by their own ability to communicate verbally, they enjoy answering simple questions like "What color is the hungry caterpillar?" or "If you were the caterpillar, what would you like to eat?"

Because preschoolers and kindergartners are developing an understanding of time, they like to talk about how they have changed as they've grown older. For instance, reading a book like *How I Was Born* might give you the opportunity to ask these kinds of questions: "What did you do when you were a little baby?" or "What things can you do now that you couldn't do when you were a baby?" Such questions are reassuring because they help children develop a sense of their own personal history and identity. These kinds of questions also help very young children more easily make the transition from being toddlers to being "kids."

You can encourage your child's creativity by asking him to answer questions that require him to

use his imagination—questions that tap into his enthusiasm about the world of make-believe. For instance, if you were reading the book *Corduroy* in which a teddy bear comes to life, you might be intrigued by your child's answer to a question like "What would happen if your bear could talk? What do you think he would ask for?"

Three- to five-year-olds also enjoy answering obvious questions about their immediate environments. They like to draw connections between characters in books and their own everyday experiences, family members, pets, and toys. Because they are still fascinated by their own ability to talk with others, they delight in asking and responding to questions to which everyone seems to know the answers. Questions like "Frances the Badger has a new baby sister. Do you know anyone who has a baby sister?" are good ways to invite young children to talk to you about themselves and about how they see the world around them.

Because preschoolers and kindergartners are beginning to see connections between actions and consequences story-sharing questions that point out this kind of connection will be of special interest

to them. Questions like "What did Peter Rabbit do to get himself in so much trouble?" or "How did the Little Engine get up the hill?" point out such connections.

TIP

To keep the conversation going, ask questions that have obvious answers, focus on the passage of time, call for imagination, relate stories to the real world, and remind children that actions have consequences.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 5

Three- to five-year-olds enjoy participating in reading sessions by listening to the story and by answering simple questions that require them to find and point out objects in the pictures or to identify characters with whom they are familiar. Young children especially enjoy hearing their favorite stories read over and over. Your child's familiarity with a favorite story will give you the opportunity to ask simple questions she will delight in answering.

Here are some books that match the developmental characteristics of beginning readers.

A Sense of Time

At this age, children begin to develop a sense of time, although their understanding of time is often as simple as "now" and "not yet." Books are a good way to advance young children's understanding of temporal terms like "before and after,"and "then and now." Books that reflect this stage of development include:

- ***Goodnight Moon*** by Margaret Wise Brown. This classic picture book portrays a little rabbit's evening ritual of bidding goodnight to each familiar thing in his moonlit room.

- ***Peter Spier's Rain*** by Peter Spier. This wordless book shows how a brother and sister enjoy a rainy day.

- ***The Very Hungry Caterpillar*** by Eric Carle. This simple but creative picture book teaches the days of the week, how to count to five, and how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Each brightly illustrated page has little round holes in it made by the hungry little caterpillar. As the number of holes grow, so does the caterpillar.

Your Child's Main Interest

Because a preschooler or kindergartner still sees herself as the center of her own universe, she tends to like stories told from only one point of view. Such stories are easy for her to relate to and identify with. Books that reflect young children's egocentric interest, thinking, and behavior include:

- ***A Baby Sister for Frances*** by Russell Hoban. Frances is an engaging badger who decides that Gloria, the new baby, is receiving entirely too much attention. Frances packs her knapsack, says good-bye to her parents, and runs away—to live under the dining room table! Frances continues to want to be the center of attention, even on Gloria's birthday.

- ***Nice Little Girls*** by Elizabeth Levy. Jackie has a problem with her new school: her teacher insists upon stereotyping classroom assignments as "boy" or "girl" jobs. Jackie's liberated views help the teacher and class to realize that tool boxes and train sets are for everyone.

- ***William's Doll*** by Charlotte Zolotow. William's father wants him to play with his basketball or trains. William wishes he had a doll to play with. His brother and friends call him "Sissy," but William's grandmother says something else. The message is one that all children and their parents should hear.

Everyday Experiences

Although at this stage many children are beginning to express curiosity about how things work in the wider world, they are most interested in their immediate environments. They enjoy stories about everyday experiences, pets, playthings, and family members. They generally like to hear stories that provide comfort and reassurance. Stories that fit these requirements include:

- ***Harry the Dirty Dog*** by Gene Zion. This cute little dog named Harry does not like soap and water, but he loves adventure.

- ***How I Was Born*** by Marie Wabbes. The author has created for young readers the essential introduction to the facts of life and love. In this picture book, a young child recounts the events leading up to his birth—beginning with his parents' first meeting.

- ***What's under My Bed?*** by James Stevenson. Two innocent but slightly worried grandchildren are reassured by their grandfather's imaginative tales about his childhood. These stories make their worries pale in comparison.

- ***When the New Baby Comes, I'm Moving Out*** by Martha Alexander. Jealousy surfaces for a little boy as he anticipates the arrival of a new baby in the house. He worries that all the attention will be diverted from him. His anger is soothed when his mother tells him about the special roles and privileges of big brothers.

A World of Make-Believe

Partly because they do much of their learning through creative play, three- to five-year-olds like stories that require them to use their imaginations. The make-believe world of talking animals or toys and of magical transformations seems very real to this age group. Stories that encourage children to rely on their creative imaginations include:

- ***Corduroy*** by Don Freeman. This story of a teddy bear's search through a department store for a friend ends when a little girl buys him with her piggy bank savings.

- ***Where's Spot?*** by Eric Hill. Spot's mother searches every corner of the house for her missing puppy. The reader joins in this search for the missing puppy by lifting page flaps to find an assortment of animals in hiding! This is an excellent book to introduce household names, animals, and the concept of "NO."

- ***Brave Irene*** by William Steig. Irene's mother is a dressmaker who must deliver a gown to the duchess for the ball. Irene's mother falls ill, and Irene must deliver the gown. She carries the huge box through a winter storm to make the delivery.

- ***The House on East 88th Street*** by Bernard Waber. This is the first in the series about Lyle the crocodile. A family discovers a crocodile in the bathtub of their new home. When the Primms overcome their fright, they see him as the most lovable and human of crocodiles.

Taking the Initiative

Preschoolers and kindergartners are beginning to see connections between actions and consequences and to draw conclusions about what constitutes good and bad behavior. They expect that good behavior will be rewarded and bad behavior will be punished in the stories they hear. Children of this age are also grasping a further connection between actions and consequences when they take pride in their own accomplishments; thus, they enjoy stories that portray small characters like themselves taking initiative. Such stories include:

- ***Katy and the Big Snow*** by Virginia Lee Burton. This is a story about a brave, untiring tractor whose round-the-clock snowplowing saves the city of Geopolis during a blizzard. Katy assists the local authorities in pursuing their duties during the snow storm.

- ***The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit*** by Beatrix Potter. Imaginative children can identify with Peter Rabbit and his naughty sense of adventure, and then sigh in relief when Peter narrowly escapes the clutches of Mr. McGregor.

- ***Madeline*** by Ludwig Bemelmans. This story begins a series of books about a daring and irrepressible personality named Madeline and her eleven friends.

- ***The Little Engine That Could*** by Watty Piper. This is the story of the little engine that smiled despite the difficult task ahead and said, "I'm not very big but I'll do my best, and I think I can—I think I can—I think I can."

Reading and Sharing with Children, Ages 6 and 7

Kids who are six and seven usually know the alphabet and are often able to sound out new words. Six- and seven-year-old readers use pictures as clues to help them make guesses about unfamiliar words. Children of this age love reading the same book over and over because frequent repetition allows them to memorize the story so that they can "read" it back to you. Developing this kind of familiarity with favorite stories will enable your young reader to gain skill and confidence through repeated practice and success.

TIP

Remember that your reading sessions should involve steady conversation. Let your child show her involvement in the story by talking about it and reacting to it. This helps reinforce the idea of reading for meaning, not just to say words.

Read-Aloud Strategies

Reading aloud to six- and seven-year-olds can go a long way toward nurturing their blossoming interest in books and reading. Children of this age take real satisfaction in their new reading and writing skills. So, they will probably be excited by the prospect of reading to you, even though they may be interested in doing so only for short periods of time. Try the following reading strategies with your young reader:

Make a game of reading by asking your child to predict events in a story by looking at the pictures of a new book before you read it together. Listen to your child tell you what she thinks is going to happen in the story just from looking at the pictures. After you have read the story, the two of you can then talk about how it did or didn't meet your child's expectations.

Encourage your child to participate in your reading sessions by pausing at points where you think she will be able to fill in or finish sentences. This is especially enjoyable with books like Dr. Seuss stories that have rhyming text or with books that have predictable phrases like the ones in *The Cake That Mack Ate*.

If your child decides that she wants to read to you (and your book sharing probably will be more successful if you let her decide when she wants to do so) make sure you don't allow your sharing session to turn into a reading lesson. You can always help your child with her reading skills when it's time for homework. Make an effort to let her know that this is relaxed time you and she will spend just reading and talking together. If your child stumbles over a word or phrase as she reads to you, you will, of course, want to

help her. Here's a good rule of thumb: silently count to five before you supply the troublesome word or phrase that has stumped your child. Correct your child's mistakes only if they significantly alter the meaning of the story.

Conversation Starters

People who are devoted readers say that books are important to them partly because situations and characters in books help them reflect on or better understand their own lives and experiences. Conversation-starting questions that invite children to relate or compare their own experience or feelings to those of the characters in the books they read are appropriate for children of all ages. For instance, if you and your child are reading *Ramona the Pest*; asking a question like "Have you ever felt like Ramona?" or "Have you ever worried that someone would stop liking you?" will encourage her to make these kinds of connections.

Because beginning readers are widening the scope of their immediate environments to include the larger world of school and their neighborhoods, they like talking about their new independence. Reading books like *Ira Sleeps Over* or *Grandaddy's Place* might give you an opportunity to talk with your child about those situations in which his new independence becomes a source of anxiety, rather than of satisfaction. You can ask questions like the following ones:

- "When you are afraid, like Ira was in the book, what makes you feel better?"
- "Ira was able to talk about how scared he was to leave his blanket behind. Do you remember a time when you were scared, and talked to someone about it? What happened?"

- "Do you think so-and-so ever gets afraid? What do you think might scare him?"

- "What things do you get scared by?"

Part of your role in book-sharing conversations is to ask questions that will get your child to talk with you about herself. But once your conversations get started, your child will probably turn the tables and ask you questions of her own. When this happens, be prepared to answer in a way that encourages further openness so that she will feel free to ask more questions.

Sometimes the question your child has asked requires some fast thinking on your part. For instance, if your conversation about Ira and his problems with sleeping over at his friend's house should lead your child to ask you what you are afraid of, you will want to respond in a way that neither shuts down the conversation nor confuses or threatens your child. Putting yourself in your child's place by saying "Well, when I was your age, I was afraid of..." is a good way to answer questions like this. Such a strategy allows you to share your experiences without imposing adult concerns and anxieties on your child.

TIP

To keep a conversation going, encourage your child to tell what it feels like to deal with an unfamiliar situation, and share thoughts and experiences you both may have had.

Creating Empathy

Asking questions that invite beginning readers to put themselves in the place of characters in books encourages these kids to further develop and express concern for others. Questions like "How do you think the mother felt when her family gave her the beautiful new chair they had saved their money to buy?" offers kids opportunities to try to see things from another person's point of view.

Because primary-school-age children expect their own sense of justice to be reflected in the stories they read, they will probably be intrigued by questions that require them to think about good/bad behavior and its consequences. Ask questions like "How did Curious George get in trouble?" or make statements like "Curious George has a lesson to learn. He made a mistake, but his owner always loves him, just like I still love you when you do something wrong." Or ask "What do you think would happen to you if you did what George did?" This invites children to formulate judgments and express their opinions about what they read.

Six- and seven-year-olds generally take pride in their ability to separate fantasy from reality. Asking questions like "Do you think this could really happen?"

or inviting your child to rewrite the ending of a story by relying on his imagination is a fun way to begin a conversation. You can even introduce the idea of writing an alternate ending for a story you've read together by teasing your child with a "what-if" statement: "What if so-and-so happened? What do you think would happen then?"

TIP:

Also encourage your child to put himself in the place of a character in the story, to talk about how things happened and what people learned, and to tell how he knows that a story is only imaginary.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 6 and 7

If your child is six or seven years old, the chart on the following page will give you a good general idea of her developmental stage and the kinds of books that might fit her new, broadening interests.

Books That Suit Your Child's Attention Span

Because six- and seven-year-olds usually have longer attention spans than toddlers and kindergartners, they are able to concentrate for longer periods without losing interest in a story. However, their attention span is still fairly limited and beginning readers may have trouble sitting still for even a twenty-minute reading period. For this reason, they tend to prefer fairly short stories.

They may also enjoy short novels when the chapters are complete episodes. You may discover that scheduling two or three short reading periods during

Children Ages 6 and 7

Developmental Characteristics	Reading Interests	Books
Attention span is increasing; interested in learning to read and write; expresses a growing sense of independence.	Prefers fairly short reading sessions; likes short stories or chapters that tell a complete incident; likes books with familiar or predictable stories; enjoys tales of responsibility and successful ventures.	Frog and Toad Are Friends Little Bear The Courage of Sarah Noble Frederick James and the Giant Peach Ramona the Pest Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Polar Bear, Polar Bear Leo, the Late Bloomer The Cake That Mack Ate Ira Sleeps Over Grandaddy's Place Good Dog, Carl
Strong sense of justice; able to apply rules of "right/wrong"; curious about gender differences.	Expects "bad" behavior to be punished and wants the "good guy" to be the hero; wants answers to questions about relationships.	Curious George Flossie and the Fox Julius, the Baby of the World Before You Were Born My Puppy is Born How I Was Born
Able to distinguish fantasy from reality; more curious about a wider range of things; developing empathy for others and a sense of humor.	Enjoys fantasy and likes to use creative play to act out stories; interests expand beyond immediate sphere of home, school, and neighborhood; begins to identify with characters in books; enjoys jokes and riddles.	Where the Wild Things Are The Amazing Voyage of Jackie Grace If I Ran the Zoo The Maggie B. The Velveteen Rabbit A New Coat for Anna A Chair for My Mother The Relatives Came Three Brave Women Where the Sidewalk Ends Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day Amelia Bedelia Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge

the day is a better strategy than demanding beginning readers' attention for one longer period of time and risking losing their interest. Some books which meet this need include:

- ***Frog and Toad Are Friends*** by Arnold Lobel. Five separate tales show how Frog and Toad learn about the give-and-take of friendship.

- ***Little Bear*** by Else Holmelund Minarik. This series of books uses elements of a child's every-day experience (getting dressed, celebrating birthdays, playing, and wishing for things he wants) to weave short stories about a child-bear and his family.

- ***The Courage of Sarah Noble*** by Alice Dalgliesh. This story, set in colonial times, introduces eight-year-old Sarah, who journeys many miles from home into the early American wilderness with her father. As Sarah sets out with her father, the last words she hears from her family are "Keep up your courage!" Sarah faces the dangers of the forest while her father builds their new cabin, and then she must stay behind in the Indian village while her father returns to the settlement for the rest of the family.

- ***Frederick*** by Leo Lionni. Frederick is a tiny gray field mouse. While his brothers and sisters gather food for the winter, Frederick gathers the colors and stories and dreams they will need to sustain their hearts and spirits through the dark, cold winter months.

- ***James and the Giant Peach*** by Roald Dahl. After his parents die (they are eaten by a wild

rhinoceros who escaped from the zoo), James sadly resigns himself to a life of misery with his two aunts. But one day he drops a bag of "magic" under his aunts' peach tree and then notices a giant peach beginning to grow there.

- ***Ramona the Pest*** by Beverly Cleary. When Ramona becomes worried that her pretty new teacher doesn't like her anymore, she almost becomes a kindergarten dropout.

Familiar Stories

As young children develop into beginning readers and strive to master new skills in reading and writing, they are trying to be successful at what they consider to be adult tasks. Thus they are usually very interested in gaining adult approval for their new accomplishments. While they do need frequent assurance that everyone progresses at his or her own rate, they also need lots of opportunities to show off their new literacy skills. Books with familiar stories or predictable phrases provide six- and seven-year-old readers with material they can settle into and get comfortable with. Here are a few sample titles:

- ***Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*** by Bill Martin. Young readers enjoy finding out what brown bear sees on each page. Bold illustrations accompany the rhyming text.

- ***Polar Bear, Polar Bear*** by Bill Martin. Martin's charming read-aloud book encourages young readers to predict what polar bear hears on each page.

- ***Leo, the Late Bloomer*** by Robert Kraus and Jose Aruego. Leo is a tiger whose father is worried that Leo hasn't learned to read and write and draw and do other things that young tigers Leo's age do. With his mother's support and reassurance, Leo learns to do all of these things and more.

- ***The Cake That Mack Ate*** by Rose Robart. Each page of this book presents a verse that builds on and rhymes with the one before it (like the song "The Farmer in the Dell"). The repetition of the earlier verses encourages young readers to read the familiar phrases in the story. As readers progress through the making of the cake for Mack, they will be surprised at the end of the story to find out who Mack is!

A Sense of Independence

Going to school and learning to read and write contribute to primary-school-age children's growing sense of independence from mom and dad. They enjoy stories of responsibility and successful, adventurous feats. They also enjoy expressing their new sense of independence by choosing their own books and activities. You might suggest the following books to reflect your beginning reader's new interest in independence:

- ***Ira Sleeps Over*** by Bernard Waber. This is a sensitive and funny story about a boy's overnight visit to a friend's house. The story focuses on Ira's personal struggle over whether he should bring along his teddy bear.

- ***Grandaddy's Place*** by Helen Griffith. A little girl from the city is frightened by the strangeness of her grandaddy's rural Georgia cabin. After a time, the grandaddy's charm and warmth open a new world for his granddaughter.

- ***Good Dog, Carl*** by Alexandra Day. After Mother steps out to do some errands, Carl and Baby get themselves into all sorts of mischief. But Carl puts everything away in time for mother's return and thus earns the words of praise, "Good Dog, Carl." This wordless book invites children to tell the story the pictures portray.

The Power of Imagination

While six- and seven-year-olds still enjoy fantasy, they are becoming more capable of distinguishing fantasy from reality. They are also learning to appreciate and experiment with the power of their own imaginations. Books that illustrate the power of imagination include:

- ***Where the Wild Things Are*** by Maurice Sendak. When he is sent to bed without his supper for behaving like a "wild thing," Max imagines a world of wild things in which he is king.

- ***The Amazing Voyage of Jackie Grace*** by Matt Faulkner. Jackie climbs into the bathtub, and his imagination carries him away. Jackie's bathtub becomes his sailing vessel where he confronts pirates and fierce storms at sea.

- ***If I Ran the Zoo*** by Dr. Seuss. Gerald McGrew makes up animals to live in his imaginary zoo. Everything from Gherkins and Seersuckers to Thwerlls and Chuggs can be found in Gerald's zoo.

➲ ***The Maggie B.*** by Irene Haas. Before going to bed, Margaret wishes on a star for her own little ship, then falls asleep. When she wakes up, she and her brother James are on board the Maggie B.

Understanding Other People

By the time kids get to be six or seven years old, they have begun to expand their sphere of interest and involvement. When they were very young children, their world revolved primarily around what happened at home and within their own families. And while they continue to need the support of close family relationships, kids at this stage of development tend to extend their interests out into their neighborhoods and school communities.

They begin to develop a stronger capacity to express caring and understanding for others. Thus these young readers often enjoy opportunities to respond to book-sharing questions that require them to identify with the characters in a book. Questions like "What would you have done in so-and-so's place?" or "How do you think Rabbit felt about the boy?" give them these kinds of opportunities. Books that provide such opportunities include:

➲ ***The Velveteen Rabbit*** by Margery Williams. In this classic tale, a toy rabbit becomes real through the love of a little boy.

- ***A New Coat for Anna*** by Harriet Ziefert. In this poignant story of hope and revitalization set in post WW II Europe, little Anna and her mother must trade their possessions for materials to make the young girl a winter coat.

- ***A Chair for My Mother*** by Vera Williams. This is a moving story about a family's dream to save enough money to buy a beautiful easy chair after a fire destroys all of their furniture.

- ***The Relatives Came*** by Cynthia Rylant. A young boy tells this warm story about the time when a carload of his relatives came to visit from Virginia. Charmingly amusing illustrations show how much fun the visit was for everyone.

- ***Three Brave Women*** by C.L.G. Martin. While sitting on the front porch swing with Mama and Grammy, Caitlin screeches that she hates Billy Huxley because she thinks he will tell everyone she is afraid of spiders and that she wears underpants that have pictures of ducks on them. After Caitlin expresses her fears, she, Mama, and Grammy hatch a plot to put Billy Huxley in his place.

Telling Right from Wrong

Along with their growing ability to identify with others, primary-school-age children usually have a strong sense of justice, and they expect their understanding of what is just and right to be reflected in the stories they read. Six- and seven-year-olds' tendency to apply the rules of right and wrong regardless of circumstances leads them to demand that right behavior be rewarded and wrong behavior be sternly and quickly punished. Books that reflect these readers' ideas about right and wrong include:

- ***Curious George*** by H.A. Rey. George is a funny little monkey whose curiosity consistently gets the best of him. In every book of the Curious George series, this little monkey's curiosity gets him in trouble.

- ***Flossie and the Fox*** by Patricia C. McKissack. In this folktale a little girl outsmarts a sly fox by refusing to believe he is a fox.

- ***Julius, the Baby of the World*** by Kevin Henkes. Lilly thinks her new baby brother is disgusting. She cannot understand why her parents think he is the most beautiful baby in the world.

The Big Question

At about the age of six or seven, children usually begin to express new curiosity about gender differences. Books that discuss these subjects in terms children understand can provide parents with a low-stress way of exploring these topics with their kids. Appropriate books include:

- ***Before You Were Born*** by Margaret Sheffield. This simple story helps very young children understand how a baby grows inside its mother in the months before it is born.

- ***My Puppy Is Born*** by Joanna Cole. Close-up photographs and forthright text show the birth and early development of a terrier's litter.

- ***How I Was Born*** by Marie Wabbes. This book speaks about conception with honesty and frankness.

A Sense of Humor

In the early grades, children seem to develop a keener sense of humor than they had as toddlers and kindergartners. They especially enjoy listening to and reading books with surprise endings, plays on words, and slapstick humor. See if your child finds the following books amusing:

- ***Where the Sidewalk Ends*** by Shel Silverstein. This popular collection of children's poetry looks at everyday life from a unique and wacky point of view.
- ***Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*** by Judith Viorst. Alexander wakes up and finds bubble gum in his hair and from there his day only gets worse. This is an amusing account of a little boy's encounter with Murphy's Law.
- ***Amelia Bedelia*** by Peggy Parish. Amelia Bedelia is a literal-minded housekeeper who does exactly what she is told. See what she does when she is instructed to "dust the furniture" and "draw the drapes."
- ***Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*** by Mem Fox. Wilfred lives next door to a home for the elderly. Many of the people who live there are his friends, but Wilfred is special friends with Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper. One day, when Wilfred overhears his parents saying that Miss Nancy has lost her memory, he decides he must help Miss Nancy find her memory.

Books on Sensitive Issues

- ***When Mama Retires*** by Karen Ackerman and Alexa Grace. Henry, Will, and Charley learn to do things around the house when Mama considers retiring from housework and becoming a wartime riveter. (**Gender Role—Male**)

- ***Allie's Basketball Dream*** by Barbara E. Barber and Darryl Ligasan. Determined in her effort to play basketball, a young Afro-American girl gives it one more shot with the support of a special friend. (**Gender Role—Female**)

- ***Smoky Night*** by Eve Bunting and David Daiz. When the Los Angeles riots break out in the streets of their neighborhood, a young boy and his mother learn the values of getting along with others no matter what their background or nationality. (**Prejudice**)

- ***Fly Away Home*** by Eve Bunting and Ronald Himler. A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal and trying not to be noticed, is given hope when he sees a trapped bird find its freedom. (**Homelessness**)

- ***Your Move*** by Eve Bunting and James Ransome. When ten-year-old James' gang initiation endangers his six-year-old brother Isaac, he finds the courage to say, "Thanks, but no thanks." (**Gangs**)

- ***The Un-Wedding*** by Babette Cole. As their parents disagree more and more about everything, Demetrius and Paula Ogglebutt decide that everyone would be happier if they "unmarry." (**Divorce**)

- ***How You Were Born*** by Joanna Cole and Margarte Miller. Text and photos explain how a baby is conceived, how it grows inside the mother's womb, and how it is born. (**Birth of a Baby**)

- ***Be Good to Eddie Lee*** by Virginia M. Fleming and Floyd Cooper. Although Christy considered him a pest, when Eddie Lee, a boy with Down's Syndrome, follows her into the woods, he shares several special discoveries with her. (**Disability—Down's Syndrome**).

- ***Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*** by Mem Fox and Juile Vivas. A small boy tries to discover the meaning of "memory" so he can restore that of an elderly friend. (**Aging**)

- ***Julius, the Baby of the World*** by Kevin Henkes. Lilly is convinced that the arrival of her new baby

brother is the worst thing that has happened in their house, until Cousin Garland comes to visit. (**Sibling Rivalry**)

- ***Losing Uncle Tim*** by Mary Kate Jordan and Judith Friedman. When his beloved Uncle Tim dies of AIDS, Daniel struggles to find reassurance and understanding, and finds that his favorite grown-up has left him a legacy of joy and courage. (**Aids and Dying**)

- ***Like Jake and Me*** by Mavis Jukes. Alex feels that he does not have much in common with his stepfather, Jake, until a fuzzy spider brings them together. (**Step-Family**)

- ***A Mother for Choco*** by Keiko Kasza. A lonely little bird named Choco goes in search of a mother. (**Adoption**)

- ***Knots on a Counting Rope*** by Bill Martin. Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses and his grandfather reminisce about the young boy's birth, his first horse, and an exciting horse race. (**Disability—Visual Impairment**)

- ***Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*** by Ken Mochizuki and Dom Lee. In 1940 Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Lithuania, saved the lives of hundreds of Polish Jewish refugees. (**War and Peace**)

- ***The Kissing Hand*** by Audrey Penn. When Chester the raccoon is reluctant to go to kindergarten for the first time, his mother teaches him a secret way to carry her love with him. (**Separation Anxiety**)

- ***Let's Talk About It: Divorce*** by Fred Rogers and Jim Judkis. This book talks about changes in children's living arrangements and other aspects of their lives following their parents' divorce. (**Divorce**)

- ***Grandfather's Journey*** by Allen Say. A Japanese-American man recounts his grandfather's journey to America which he later also undertakes, and the feelings of being torn by a love for two different countries. (**Ethnic Identify**)

- ***The Tenth Good Thing about Barney*** by Judith Viorst. In an attempt to overcome his grief, a boy tries to think of the ten best things about his dead cat. (**Death of a Pet**)

Conclusion

Here is a brief review of the most important points to consider as you work with your child.

Working with Children, Ages 3 to 5

The following ideas apply to younger children who are just becoming acquainted with the printed word.

General Guidelines

The most important thing to keep in mind is that book-sharing should be an *active* process that encourages your child to become *engaged* with reading and to *share* responses to the story. Your child should realize that printed words have *meaning* and can be reacted to and talked about, just like events in real life.

At this age level, children seem to learn by leaps and bounds. Although their language abilities develop rapidly, their attention span is short and their concept of time focuses on "now" and "not yet." Keep your reading and conversation sessions short and stick to subjects that your child can talk about.

Children are also curious about their world and should be encouraged to let their interests and imaginations lead them where they will. Stories about everyday events are especially interesting to young children. Look through the books in your library or bookstore to find more information about subjects that interest your child.

Book-Sharing Conversations

Keep these ideas in mind when talking about books.

- Ask questions that have obvious answers which the child can find in the story.
- Focus on the passage of time: what happened first, what happened next, and so on.
- Help your child use his imagination: "What might have happened if the bear had *not* found the honey?"
- Try to relate events in the story to events that your child encounters in the real world.
- Take advantage of the fact that some stories present situations your child can use to decide what is true and what is made-up, what is right and what is wrong.

Choosing Books

When you are choosing books to read and talk about, keep these general guidelines in mind.

- A sense of time becomes increasingly important to young children. Stories can help them understand the concepts of "now" and "then," "before" and "after."

- Children view the world entirely from their own perspective. Books that take such an approach will be of interest.

- Young children are wrapped up in their own everyday experiences. Stories can help them feel comforted and reassured when they see that others have the same kinds of experiences.

- Stories of make-believe can encourage children to become creative and imaginative.

- Books can help young children learn that actions have consequences and that they can take pride in their accomplishments.

Working with Children, Ages 6 and 7

Here are some reminders of things you can do when your child begins to learn to read.

General Guidelines

Although your child may be able to read moderately well on his own, you can still take turns reading to each other and the guidelines given for ages three to five still apply to a great degree. Remember: *Active* engagement with the printed page is the major goal. As children get older and become better readers, they should realize that the printed page has *meaning* and that the point is to understand what is written and to react to it—not just to "say" the words.

As your child's reading becomes increasingly independent, follow these suggestions to help your shared reading become more and more worthwhile.

- Try to predict what might happen next in a story. This encourages your child to focus on meaning and to make logical guesses about what could happen next. After you have finished the story, talk about how it differed from your expectations
- Read a certain passage and then ask your child to finish the sentence. This is fun with Dr. Seuss books or stories with predictable phrases.
- Make your book-sharing a relaxed time, not a reading lesson. Don't worry about correcting errors during your sharing time unless they affect the meaning of the story. You can pay attention to these problems when you do homework. If your child isn't sure of a word, wait a few seconds before offering help.

Book-Sharing Conversations

Here are a few suggestions for talking about books with children in this age group.

- Ask if your child has ever encountered a situation like the one in the story. "How did you feel? What did you do differently?"

- Read stories that show children beginning to become more independent. How does it feel to encounter new situations and to have to deal with problems they haven't encountered before? How does the character in the story deal with these problems?

- Share your own ideas and reactions to a story. If your child is uncertain how to respond, you can tell what you did when you were younger and encountered a similar situation.

- Ask questions that focus on *how* and *why*. How did a character in the story get into trouble? "Why do you suppose something happened the way it did?" These questions will help your child become more and more actively engaged with the story you are reading together.

Choosing Books

Six- and seven-year-olds have longer attention spans than they did in the past, but reading sessions should still not exceed fifteen or twenty minutes. Short stories fit this requirement very well. Here are some other helpful hints for choosing books.

- Children like to meet new challenges and feel they are taking on grown-up tasks. Frequent support

and encouragement are important. Also, stories with familiar patterns and predictable phrases are especially enjoyable at this age level.

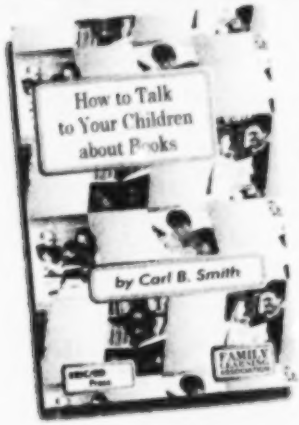
- As children go to school and become more independent, they like to read stories about children who are doing the same thing.

- Children become better able to distinguish fantasy from reality, but imaginative stories are still interesting to them.

- As they become more independent, children also become more aware of the rest of the world. Stories can help them understand and empathize with others.

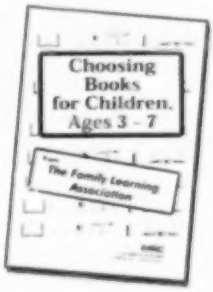
These brief reminders should help you keep the most important goal always clearly in sight: Your child should *actively* engage the printed page. Book-sharing is not about correcting errors or simply saying the words on the page. Instead, it is about focusing on the *meaning* of the printed word and talking about what happens in the story and how your child reacts to it.

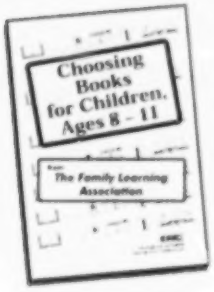
If you found this book useful, please try the other books in the Series!



How to Talk to Your Children about Books *by Carl B. Smith*
Start a conversation that will last a lifetime. This book teaches you five easy techniques to prompt book discussions, guidelines for selecting books, how to make it a two-way exchange, plus motivation, values, and making it fun!

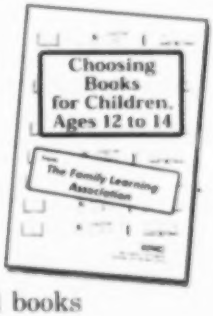
Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
Use this resource to appeal to a variety of interests in your kindergarten to primary-age children. Filled with great tips for keeping book conversations going, this book pinpoints a vast array of age-appropriate reading materials.





Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
Quick summaries of a huge collection of titles will make it easy to provide good reading for your pre-teens. Top-notch authors, relevant themes, and sensitive issues make this a good companion at the library or bookstore.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14
Let literature open up discussion about some of the difficult issues your teen is experiencing. Includes a special section on communicating about books though writing and journaling.



For information about these and other helpful books
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101, Bloomington, Indiana 47401
1.800.759.4723 www.kidscanlearn.com

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

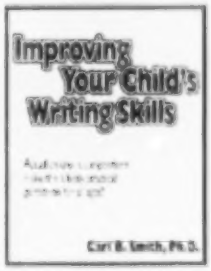
Other Resources Available

Tutoring Children in Reading and Writing

Book 1: Kindergarten
Book 2: Grades 1-2

These guidebooks use a hands-on approach to helping children improve essential skills. Using easy and effective activities, they focus on the building blocks of reading and writing with sample worksheets that focus on letter recognition, spelling, phonics, and comprehension.

Improving Your Child's Writing Skills



Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from Pre-Writing and Drafting to Revising and Proofreading. The practical work sheets form a framework to hone the skills of any young writer.

Helping Children to Learn SERIES

Improving Reading and Learning
Phonics and Other Word Skills
Reading to Learn
Creating Life-Long Readers
The Self-Directed Learner

For information about these and other helpful books
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101, Bloomington, Indiana 47401
1.800.759.4723 www.kidscanlearn.com

Choose good, high-interest books for your children!

- **Books to talk about**
- **Age-appropriate**
- **Variety of interests**
- **Quick summaries to guide you**
- **Top-notch children's authors**

Take this book with you to the library or bookstore. Plan reading adventures for months. Get gifts for birthdays and holidays.

This book helps you select from among the thousands of books available for this age group.

Collect All Four Books in this Series!

- **How to Talk to Your Children about Books**
- Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
- Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
- Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14

The Family Learning Association
1.800.759.4723 • www.kidscanlearn.com